

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF  
THE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OF GREENSBORO  
PLAZA LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM  
MELVIN MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING  
June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

The Redevelopment Commission of Greensboro met in a special meeting in the Plaza Level Conference Room, Melvin Municipal Office Building, on Thursday June 29<sup>th</sup>, at 4:30 PM. Commissioners present were: Chair Jerry Leimenstoll, Bob Mays, Angela Carmichael, and Dawn Chaney. Staff included Dyan Arkin, Barbara Harris, Cyndi Blue and Mike Cowhig representing the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD), and Becky Jo Peterson-Buie representing the City Attorney's Office. Also present was Jim Blackwood, Esq., attorney for the Commission.

**1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010 REGULAR MEETING**

Mr. Mays moved to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Ms. Carmichael. The Commission voted unanimously, 4-0, in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Leimenstoll, Mays, Carmichael, Chaney. Nays: None.)

**2. SOUTH ELM STREET REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

**A) PRESENTATION BY URBAN HARVEST**

Dawn Leonard, 711 N. Greene St., co-founder of Urban Harvest, introduced the other members of the group to the Commission. The mission of Urban Harvest is to provide and promote urban food production, distribution, and education, made accessible to all citizens, and using the principle of sustainability. Their vision is for all of Greensboro to have access to fresh, healthy, and local food. Justin Leonard, 711 N. Greene St., co-founder of Urban Harvest, stated some projects the group is working on is installation of residential vegetable garden and installation of gardens at childcare centers. They also have a partnership with the Greensboro Children's Museum. Lu Gamble, 600 N. Mendenhall St., co-founder of Urban Harvest, described a recent project at Dunleith Community Garden in the historic Aycock neighborhood and presented pictures. They grew several types of vegetables over the summer, and began winter gardening experiments were fairly successful. They delivered crops in December for sale. They began garnering support for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in February. A CSA is where people buy all the necessary food and supplies for the garden in the beginning of the season, and then receive weekly deliveries throughout the harvest season. Throughout the past several months they have used support of many groups of volunteers to care for the garden and begin other neighborhood gardens. They build the community and the garden together through the work of community volunteers. They have been developing partnerships throughout there existence. One partnership is with a UNCG communications class that will help with fundraising and community outreach. Other partnerships include the Children's' Museum, SLICK, and many others.

Throughout this time they have also been working with John Linn and Jerry Leimenstoll as advisors on how to create a vision and express it. They want to have a mobile market, volunteer groups, create a year-round productive urban farm, and to offer community education. Ms. Gamble stated the purpose of this presentation for the Board is that they are interested in establishing a model urban farm. They are particularly interested in the location of 1201 Eugene St. near the Downtown Greenway. The site is the perfect size for their plans, which would include a small building for storage. The soil is well drained, and in good condition, though there may be some pollution. If there are pollution issues they are interested in using phytoremediation principles, and use that as a demonstration for cleaning up contaminated soil. They believe neighborhoods adjacent to this site would benefit greatly from a project like this. The proposed farm would serve as a hub and model for urban food production, distribution, and education. A mobile market would be an eventual goal to provide local, fresh produce to areas without adequate access to those resources, also known as food deserts. Emily Nichols, 7847 Alcorn Rd., presented a scheduled plan on how to reach these goals to the Board as Ms. Leonard explained the time line of the use of the land and the growth of the organization.

Dyan Arkin stated that staff has spoken with Ms. Leonard several times over the last few weeks. This is not a proposal to the Commission at this point, but rather an information presentation. The group is hoping to find out if the Commission is receptive to a proposal of this type. If so, then staff could look at the proposal in more depth. She recently attended the Sustainable Communities Summit, and there was a lot of discussion about the local food movement and its benefits to community development.

Mr. Mays stated that this site does not seem to have any short term development use in the South Elm St. Redevelopment area. He stated he has a business that may be interested in working with the group in more direct terms based on the use of methane gas from the landfill. He encouraged staff to look more closely at the proposal and the location because it would help facilitate several goals of the redevelopment area. Projects like this can even lead to job creation. Ms. Arkin clarified that this would be a permanent location, unlike the East Side Park project.

Ms. Chaney asked if the restaurants would be the key market, and how they would decide how to facilitate the community over the market. Ms. Gamble stated that the vision is to work with the community, and the sell to restaurants would not be the focus. Mr. Leonard stated that the marketing of high value crops can help to fund community projects.

Ms. Carmichael asked if they have met with the community to hear their thoughts. Ms. Leonard stated that they have intention to do so, but did not want to put forth empty promises. Once something more concrete is developed that will be a primary focus. Chair Leimenstoll stated that they advised the group not to go to the community until the land use was granted.

Mr. Mays moved that staff work with Urban Harvest to craft a proposal back to the Commission in August, seconded by Ms. Carmichael. The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Leimenstoll, Chaney, Mays, Carmichael. Nays: None.)

## **B) UPDATE ON PROPERTY ISSUES WITHIN THE SOUTH ELM REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

Ms. Arkin stated that an agreement has been finalized with the Mr. Gray concerning the Bragg St. alleyway issue. The agreement is that the Commission has given them the right to have access to their property in the course of the development, with a variety of locations possible.

## **4. OLE ASHEBORO REDEVELOPMENT AREA: 620 MLK – UPDATE ON REHABILITATION**

Mike Cowhig stated that the situation has been resolved satisfactorily. He presented a copy of a Certificate of Appropriateness that has been issued to Mr. Torres for the rehabilitation of the home at 620 MLK. Mr. Torres has been very cooperative, and staff did not want to delay him anymore than necessary. Mr. Torres will not be making any substantial changes to the exterior of the historic property. Mr. Torres submitted plans, and staff has reviewed them. Mr. Torres has agreed to follow the South Greensboro Historic District Guidelines. Staff feels the resolution is acceptable in that the exterior will be retained, and the home will renovated for single family home ownership.

Chair Leimenstoll asked if the building will still be under the Secretary of the Interior standards. Mr. Cowhig stated under a partnership between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the National Trust, more flexible guidelines were produced in the interest of affordable housing. These are the guidelines that will be followed. Chair Leimenstoll asked if the existing windows will be matched as closely as possible. Mr. Cowhig stated that the existing windows are planned to be maintained, but there may be one or two at the rear of the house that may be replaced with wooden windows.

## **5. ARLINGTON PARK REDEVELOPMENT AREA: 1220 RANDOLPH – UPDATE ON REHABILITATION**

Mr. Arkin stated this was the property that was under contract with Preservation Greensboro Development Foundation. There was a possibility that NSP funds could be used for the rehabilitation of the property. At that time the Commission directed staff to work on an amendment with PGDF to extend the contract, but there were several variables with the possible funding. At the PGDF Board meeting they decided not to pursue execution of that amendment so that NSP funding could be used if available.

Cyndi Blue stated that recently the federal government loosened the definition associated with foreclosed and abandoned properties to include condemned properties. This property has a condemnation order following the fire from last summer. The rehabilitation of a housing unit is a stand alone activity under these funds, so no acquisition or transfer process was necessary. A rehabilitation write up has been completed, and they are in the final stages of going through the historic preservation requirements. They hope to have the rehabilitation go out for bid next week, and be on the City Council agenda for July 20<sup>th</sup>, subject to approval by the Commission.

Jim Blackwood asked if it made a difference that the Commission owns the property and not the City. Ms. Blue stated that it did not because the City could use City funds to rehabilitate property in the Commission's ownership. Barbara Harris stated that if the Commission would authorize the transaction and allow staff to work with legal the issue could be worked out. They have on several occasions used City funds to rehabilitate property not owned by the City.

Mr. Mays moved to proceed with the rehabilitation at 1220 Randolph, and for staff to work with the Legal department to meet all requirements to effect that project, including transfer of the real property itself to the City if necessary, seconded by Ms. Carmichael. The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Leimenstoll, Chaney, Mays, Carmichael. Nays: None.)

## **6. SOUTH ELM STREET REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

### **C) TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON DRAFT RFP**

Ms. Arkin stated that the many of the comments returned by the advisory committee on the draft RFP are in the form of questions and that answering those questions would help to determine what the Commission wants to see developed. Staff categorized the questions in a hand out and presented it to the Commission for direction. Seth Harry, urban designer, opted not to participate in the process because it may preclude his ability to work with potential developers for the project. The team now consists of John Linn, Mac Nichols, and Mitchell Silver.

John Linn, 5009 High Point Rd., summarized his perspective on what the advisory committee did and their overall questions. The draft RFP is a very credible and developed set of standards and criteria that are intended to get the development the Commission wants. One of the largest aspects is not so much what it says but how it says it. There are a few places in the document where it is very clear what the vision is, but it is not all together or positioned where it should be. The entire vision belongs somewhere at the beginning. Vision is the most important aspect of the RFP because it is where everything else comes from. He cited the presentation from Urban Harvest, and stated that they were able to portray their dream and answer the questions posed to them because they were clear on the overall vision. The author of the vision needs to be the Commission.

The vision will lead to the lists of goals and objectives, guidelines, prescriptive requirements, administrative procedures, and all kinds of things that will make up the final RFP. Another aspect important for the Commission to determine is the administrative procedures that will ensure what is wanted is produced. How is what we are after is going to be monitored, tested verified, etc.? Another important perspective is the dialogue about being generative rather than prescriptive in the nature of the proposal itself, what is wanted versus how it is achieved. Does the Commission want prescriptive elements that lay out specifically what should be done, or does it want a more generative approach that gives an end goal and the administrative procedures to get there? Even some of the physical aspects can be given a more generative approach. There are certain things that the RFP will need to say we want these things, but the RFP then goes beyond that in a way that may be

unclear for a developer. A way around that is to give better explanation about what the Commission is thinking about, the features they value, and an overall vision.

The dynamic between the physical and the social aspect is also very important. Physical development requirements are the focus in the draft RFP. The social and community aspects are not specifically explained. If the community is mentioned in the document then it needs to be more clearly defined as far as involvement and expectations. Clearly defining the vision will help direct the reasons for the mixture of housing, the culture that is hoped for at the site and what the Commission is trying to accomplish through this project.

Ms. Arkin stated many of these answers are pulled together through the redevelopment plan and previous work on the project, but it needs to be refined and included in the RFP. She asked for more direction from the Commission in regards to the generative or prescriptive preferences of the Commission. There are certainly specific things the Commission will want, but there is an overall outcome that may be better served through a more generative approach.

Chair Leimenstoll stated that as Commissioners, they should be able to respond to any number of questions from the community or City Council with the same relaxed mode and clarity of understanding that the group from Urban Harvest showed. This can only be accomplished by developing a singular vision for the project.

Mr. Linn stated that there are many aspects of the project where what needs to happen should be more clearly defined than how it is accomplished. The RFP should present an outcome based directive and developers can present how it can be accomplished. How the goals are achieved is also important, but what is desired drives how it will be accomplished. Chair Leimenstoll stated that the vision is derived from what type of life the Commission sees at the site five or ten years from now, and what the community wants and expects.

Mr. Mays thanked Mr. Linn for putting on paper what the Commission has struggled with since the inception of the project and outlining categories of concern. Even though the community has looked at this project, a lot has happened over the years to change the way development happens. He still believes there are some failures in the way this is being approached. He believes a meeting needs to be held to develop a vision. He is also very worried about the involvement of the City Council, specifically the City's financial investment, and believes they also need to be involved. Chair Leimenstoll agreed with the need to meet and go over what has already been developed to examine an overall vision.

Chair Leimenstoll asked the Commission members to go through the redevelopment plan with life questions in mind to prepare for a meeting to develop a shared vision. Mr. Linn asked for them to consider what is missing from the RFP, and what else might need to be included.

Ms. Chaney stated she felt the longer range expectations and changes should also be considered when thinking about the vision. She stated that the issues of demographics, the downtown greenway, employment, and many other aspects will change dramatically over the next 20 years. Those changes need to be included in the development of a vision.

The Commission decided to cancel the next regular meeting and set a special meeting for July 21<sup>st</sup> to discuss the vision of this project. Commission members were encouraged to reread the redevelopment plan and other documents related to the plans for this site. The Commission directed staff to approach the draft with a more generative approach and eliminate redundancies for review and discussion by the Commission.

Mr. Mays had some apprehension about asking for cash flow and direct financial information due to public information laws. Becky Jo Peterson-Buie stated that there are some things that are protected especially as related to real estate transactions. Items proposed in response to an RFP can be kept confidential if they ask for them to be. She stated that some information could be kept confidential, but the issue would need to be looked at more closely.

After some discussion concerning the City's involvement, Mr. Mays stated that at some point he would like to know where the buck stopped for making decisions as far as city investment. Mr. Blackwood stated the problem is two pronged because the City needs to be involved from the beginning, but the actual investment may not be outlined until a development proposal is more concrete. Ms. Arkin stated that there are two ways that cities usually approach infrastructure investment in development RFPs. Either the investment is set from the beginning, i.e. the City will do A, B, and C., or the city's investment is a competitive part of the development proposal, i.e. what does the developer need from the city to make it work. Chair Leimenstoll stated that the more generative second approach seems like the only choice with this type of project.

## **7. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Mays stated that he represented the Commission at the recent Human Resources community meeting on the search for a new Planning and Community Development Director. There was some very good feedback from those in attendance. He stated that they discussed issues of developing a vision of the new department and not to exclude consideration of the private sector leaders for the position. The next step is to get the Council more involved with the vision of the combined department.

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There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 6:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Curry,  
Secretary, HCD

DC/jd